

only of the new ideas respecting the relations of man to God.

In this field of doctrine and religion he was himself the originator of a school. His authorities, his teachers, were not the thinkers of his own century, but the fathers of the early Church. Few, perhaps, of his ideas were new in the sense that they had never before been conceived by man. But many were absolutely new to his age. In those days there was no scientific knowledge of the past, and mere tradition can be soon altered. If the Catholic faith of the tenth century had been modified, no one in the fourteenth would have known that any such change had taken place. Even the memory of the Albigenses and their terrible fate seems to have vanished, or to have survived only as a tale that is told. They are not mentioned in Wycliffe's writings. He did not borrow his heresies from them, as the Hussites borrowed from him. Wycliffe's re-statements, if such they were, were therefore to all intents and purposes discoveries. The doctrine of Transubstantiation had not always been held by the Church, but it had been held for many generations when it was denied by Wycliffe. His declaration that his own view had been the orthodox faith for 'the thousand years that Satan was bound/ * was of little meaning to the unlearned and the unimaginative.

He developed this famous heresy in 1379 and 1380, during the latter part of his residence at Oxford. He had previously believed in the great miracle,² but was led into his new position, he declares, by the metaphysical consideration of the impossibility of accidents existing without substance. This may well be true ; the terms are a philosophical way of stating the plain man's difficulties. But there were, many other considerations, besides metaphysical arguments, which influenced his judgment. Transubstantiation was unsuited to the general character of his mind, which always found difficulty in attributing very high sacredness to particles of matter. Thus he complained that the orthodox view of the Eucharist was a cause of idolatry, that the people made the host their God.³ Ever since his day, the question has been the shibboleth

¹ E. E. W., iii. 408.

² « *De Eucharistia*, Introd. p. iv.

³ *Ibid.* 14, 315-8, 142-3 ; *De Blasphemid*, 31.